



WOW: Word Of the Week

Distractions

September 17, 2025

In a Harvard University study titled, *"A wandering mind is an unhappy mind,"* researchers Matthew Killingsworth and Daniel Gilbert discovered that we spend almost half of our waking hours with our minds inattentive--distracted and wandering. Rather than making us more productive or happier, this lack of focus, these periods of "mindlessness," do just the opposite. The study found that happiness depends less on what we do and more on being fully present in the moment. A focused mind is filled and fulfilled; a scattered mind is emptied.

When we focus on what is essential, we flourish. When we scatter ourselves in innumerable secondary concerns, we tire ourselves and lose sight of the goal.

The Christian life requires concentration. (My list of potential WOW ideas includes concentration, but I decided to write about distractions.) The vision may be exciting, the strategy workable, the mission clear – but without a consistent focus, efforts are diluted by competing "ministries" that do little or nothing to produce disciples. The trivial trumps the urgent.

The modern church is too often like the rider who jumped on his horse and rode off in ten directions. Mission impossible! One author described the contemporary church as "ministerial Marthas." Hurrying, scurrying, full calendars, programs, events, meetings – but where is the fruit? Where are the disciples who are being formed by sitting at the feet of Jesus?

My past years in ministry were often an example of hyperactivity. Human hyperactivity at times reaps the harvest; but God's guidance toward his eternal purpose multiplies the harvest and reaches the multitudes of lost people.

Distractions. The word itself suggests that the essential has been overwhelmed by secondary matters. What is the mission? Why do we end up doing so many things that have little to do with fulfilling the mission?

Perhaps it is because distractions often appear legitimate. Perhaps it is because it is easier to float—even though we end up disappointed. Perhaps it is because it is often hard to say no.

Distractions compete for time, effort, strength, talents, resources. Distractions disguise themselves as success! Look what was done! Another activity, event, program... But—were any disciples developed? A scattered, busy church may look successful, and advance only slowly if at all.

The early church was focused. It devoted itself to teaching, worship, sharing, prayer. Disciples were being added daily (Acts 2). When distractions arose (Acts 4-7), they were handled so that the church could continue to grow!